

## Short communications

### Notes on birds in Ethiopia

During a short visit to Ethiopia between 26 November and 9 December 1994, a number of interesting records were made by M. Lambarth, S. Fisher and me, including what would appear to be the first record of the Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* for the country.

**Harwood's Francolin *Francolinus harwoodi*** A pair was seen at the roadside 200 m north of the Jemma Bridge on the road to Alem Ketema on 6 December. At least two others were heard calling, one each side of the road just south of the bridge. This species begins to call at first light and we saw the two roadside birds at 06:10. Birds continued to call for another hour or so but after that calling became sporadic or ceased altogether.

**Bronze-winged Courser *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*** Two flushed in daylight and then observed at close range in the Jemma Valley between the Jemma River and Alem Ketema on 5 December. This appears to be the first record from Ethiopia, the statement in Urban & Brown (1971) and the statement and map in Urban *et al.* (1986) are apparently incorrect. Dr J. S. Ash (*in litt.*) states that he has been unable to trace a record of this species in Ethiopia. All the records supplied to him by Dr D. W. Snow for inclusion in the latter's *Atlas of speciation in African non-passerine birds* (Snow 1978) were from Eritrea. The plot for Ethiopia proper in Snow (*op. cit.*) was presumably in error.

**African White-winged Dove *Streptopelia reichenowi*** At least 20 seen and heard calling along the Daau River at Melkha Ghuba on 28 November; some were photographed. Most appeared to be paired and there was much calling and display. The birds were confined to a narrow strip of riverine vegetation; there are no borassus palms in the vicinity.

**Prince Ruspoli's Turaco *Tauraco ruspolii*** One was seen and photographed in typical habitat 15 km south of Kibre Mengist on the Wendo-Negele road on 27 November. The bird was seen in a flowering acacia tree and also visited several other deciduous trees in the immediate area where some fruiting trees were present. The bird did not make any typical turaco calls although it uttered a curious high-pitched *dzzuit* anxiety note when I stalked it to obtain photographs.

**Sidamo Lark *Heteromirafr sidamoensis*** At least five were found in grassland at the junction of the Filtu-Arero tracks, 13 km south of Negele on 28 November. This record represents the first field observation of this species which was only previously known from two specimens (*vide* Robertson *in press*).

**White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis*** One was seen at a site 28 km north of Mega on the main Mega-Yavello road on 29 November. It was seen flying low over the scattered acacia trees and also perched in one. A culvert about 2 km north of this site had the remains of at least eight mud-cup nests which might possibly have belonged to this species. No other hirundines were seen in the area.

**Sombre Rock Chat *Cercomela dubia*** A pair was found and watched at length in a dry gully with some outcrops of lava 39 km north of the Awash National Park gate on the road from Ankober to Awash (north of the Kesem River) on 7 December. This species is apparently seldom recorded.

**African Moustached Warbler *Sphenoeacus mentalis*** One was seen in lush vegetation at a roadside stop 15 km south of Agere Selem on the Wendo–Negele road (altitude 2650 m) on 27 November. All previous records are from southwestern Ethiopia and Urban & Brown (1971) give no records east of the Rift Valley.

**Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*** One in juniper forest about 9 km west of Yavello on 29 November; this species is rarely recorded in Ethiopia.

**Grey-headed Silverbill *Lonchura griseicapilla*** Two at Melkha Ghuba on 28 November; apparently not well known in Ethiopia.

**White-throated Seed-eater *Serinus xanthopygius*** A single bird was seen feeding among rank vegetation at the base of the first part of the escarpment on the southern side of the Jemma Valley on 6 December.

**Yellow-throated Seed-eater *Serinus flavigula*** One was seen well and watched singing from the top of a low bush at the Melkha Ghebdu site described by Ash & Gullick (1990), 19 km below Ankober at 1350 m on 6 December. No other sightings were made despite spending over an hour at that site and making short stops at several other apparently suitable sites further on towards Awash.

**Salvadori's Seed-eater *Serinus xantholaema*** At least six seen and heard at the bend of the road at the bottom of the Weyb River gorge (1100 m) at Sof Omar at about 10:00 on 2 December. The birds were very active and flighty, singing briefly from the tops of acacia trees then dropping into impenetrable vegetation where they were lost to view.

### Acknowledgement

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### References

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